

raise awareness of and response to cardiovascular disease and stroke.

This spring here in the House of Representatives we will be conducting some hearings on the effect of women and heart disease together. Increased research on these and other women's health issues can and will improve the quality and length of our lives.

Mr. Speaker, I, along with my colleagues in the Women's Caucus, are committed to raising awareness about women's health issues and to increase funding for women's health research; and today is an opportunity for us to speak on different topics but with a united voice. We, colleagues in the Women's Caucus and men as well and Members of Congress, are talking about and raising the awareness of issues pertaining to women's health.

HEALTH INITIATIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about the state of public health in America. Although we know more about health hazards and the importance of a healthy life-style today than we did 25 years ago, our health is actually getting worse in many respects.

Chronic diseases account for three out of four deaths in the United States annually; and 100 million Americans, more than a third of the population, suffer from some sort of chronic disease.

Chronic conditions are on the rise. The rate of learning disabilities rose 50 percent in this last decade. Endocrine and metabolic diseases such as diabetes and neurologic diseases such as migraine headaches and multiple sclerosis increased 20 percent between 1986 and 1995.

The rising incidence of disease can be attributed partly to the environment. This means not only air pollution and the rising CO₂ levels, which affect the quality of the air we breathe, but factors such as industrial chemicals and plasticizers, increased exposure to low-dose radiation from sources that range from toasters to aircrafts, certain medications which affect the hormone production, and especially a person's life-style, including the diet, tobacco and alcohol use.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud recently to introduce the Women's Health Environmental Research Centers Act, a bill that enhances scientific research in women's health.

□ 1330

There has been a lack of initiatives to especially look at women's health in connection with the environment. Women may be at a greater risk for disease associated to environmental exposures due to several factors, including body fat and size, a slower metabolism of toxic substances, hormone

levels, and, for many, more exposure for household cleaning reagents.

Over the past decade, evidence has accumulated linking effects of the environment on women and reproductive health, cancer, injury, asthma, autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis and multiple sclerosis, birth defects, Parkinson's, mental retardation and lead poisoning. Lead and other heavy metals found in the environment have been implicated in increased bone loss and osteoporosis in post-menopausal women.

In one interesting study in New York, researchers found that women carrying a mutant form of a breast cancer gene are at higher risk of developing breast or ovarian cancer if they were born after 1940, as compared to women with the same mutant genes before 1940. This suggests that environmental factors are affecting the rates of incidence.

The interaction between environmental factors and one's genes also affect the susceptibility to disease. This will be a major area of research now that the Human Genome Project has been completed and new disease-related genes are being found at a rapid pace.

The evidence is clear and accumulating daily that the by-products of our technology are linked to illness and disease and that women are especially susceptible to these environmental health-related problems.

We need health research programs that are specifically targeted towards women's health. The passage of the Women's Health Environmental Research Centers Act will be a crucial step toward establishing the valuable and needed basic research on the interactions between women's health and environment.

The second initiative needed is to increase awareness and access for Americans to preventive screening tests for diseases such as cancer. Screening will save thousands of lives if it is detected at its earliest and most treatable stage.

I will soon introduce, along with the gentleman from Maryland (Mrs. MORELLA), the Colorectal Cancer Screening Act. Often colorectal cancer does not present any symptoms at all until late in the disease's progression. When discovered through screening tests, benign polyps can be removed, preventing colorectal cancer from ever occurring. But, unfortunately, fewer than 40 percent of colorectal cancer patients have ever their cancer diagnosed early.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States for men and women combined. An estimated 56,700 people will die from colorectal cancer this year; and 135,400 new cases will be diagnosed. These newly diagnosed cases that will be divided nearly evenly among men and women are particularly tragic because they could be prevented.

Medicare began covering colorectal cancer screening in 1998, and many in-

surers now cover them also. However, all insurers must give enrollees access to this life-saving benefit, similar to what has been done for mammography screening.

Finally, I would like to mention that Congress has asked the Centers for Disease Control to develop a nationwide tracking network so we can begin to draw the critical link between disease and environmental toxins, genetic susceptibility and life-style. The Women's Caucus followed up with a letter to the CDC director, Jeffrey Koplan, to reiterate our interest in this important initiative.

Although we do not have cures for the most devastating disease that affects women, we can minimize our chances of developing them or at least prolong the years that we are healthy by the understanding of the risk factors, both environmental and genetic, as well as taking control of our health by having preventive screening tests before it is too late.

As a public servant and a scientist, I believe that one of the most important concerns of Congress should be to help to promote America's public health. Congress should commit itself to provide all Americans access to medical technologies that save lives, and Congress must provide continued funding for scientific research across all disciplines.

NEW ADMINISTRATION IS NOT SERIOUS ABOUT ADDRESSING GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GILCHREST). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I, as a Democrat, have an admission to make. I have come before the House to admit that I was fooled into believing that the new administration was actually serious about doing something about global climate change. I was fooled into having hopes that this administration would abide by its promises to show some leadership to do something about carbon dioxide, which is polluting our atmosphere and warming our planet.

I had those hopes until yesterday. I want to tell my colleagues why I had those hopes. The new director of the Environmental Protection Agency, former Governor Christie Todd Whitman, said last week that she wanted to work to do something to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from our polluting plants. A few weeks ago, the Secretary of the Treasury said that he believed that this was a serious problem, that it needed to be addressed, and the government could no longer afford to ignore it.

The President of the United States last September told the American people and promised the American people that, if elected President of the United States, he would work to curtail carbon dioxide emissions from our power